

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



Enclosure 2c
September 1, 2011

Work Session

RIDE

Tuesday, August 9, 2011

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Attending: George Caruolo (chairman), Lorne Adrain, Carolina Bernal, Colleen Callahan, Robert Carothers, Karin Forbes, Patrick Guida, Mat Santos, B. Shimberg

The meeting convened at 4:00 p.m.

Chairman Caruolo welcomed everyone and acknowledged that the meeting was a Session of the Board of Regents duly noticed and he asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Approval of Agenda

On a motion duly made by Regent Forbes and seconded by Regent Callahan it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education accept the day's agenda.

Vote: 9 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follow:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, K. Forbes, P. Guida,
M. Santos, B. Shimberg

NAYS: 0

Commissioner Gist addressed the Board and took a few minutes to re-visit legislation that created charter schools in R.I.

- The key appeal of the Charter School concept is its promise of increased accountability for student achievement in exchange for increased school autonomy. Those two things come in partnership.

- In addition, the purpose of having Charter Schools in R.I. is that they are intended to serve as models, vanguards or laboratories, and an expression of the on-going and vital state interest in the improvement of education.
- The idea behind public Charter schools is to lift up improvement and lift up academic achievement for every student in R.I. and it is in that spirit that RIDE created its Strategic Plan.
- There is no one thing in the Strategic Plan that will resolve the concerns or lift up the academic achievement for all students. But rather we believe that every aspect of the plan fitting together the way it fits together will get us to the goals we have set for our state.
- Charter public schools are an essential component of the overall plan for transforming education.
- They are not to be viewed as an alternative to the system of public education, but a vital part of our system and a part of all of RIDE's work.
- They are part of the study of the Common Core.
- One of the public charter schools was one of the pilot sites in the test of educator evaluation system.
- The investment that RI is making to the current work as well as the new work with Race to the Top is investing in every single school in the state, and public charter schools are a small part of the overall plan.
- The plan is to recruit excellent public charter schools to expand within R.I. the ones that are already here, and to encourage and attract high performing schools from across the country that have a track record of serving students well to come to R.I.
- Looking for schools that have proven track record of closing achievement gaps and advancing learning for all students, especially those students of color and minority student, and it is important that these are schools with a reputation of working collaboratively with traditional public schools from the districts that they draw from.
- The Achievement First application has gone through a rigorous review process and meets all the criteria required.

Next, Jennifer Smith, RIDE's Chief Transformation Officer, went over the protocols of the application and her previous experience as a principal of a public school working collaboratively with a charter school within her district, and answered questions from the Board around:

- Do Mayoral Academies go through a different process vs. a regular charter schools?

- Do non-Mayoral Charter Schools have to receive approval from local school committees?
- Who was on the charter review committee?
- How does the presence of a charter school incentivize public schools?
- What changes for the teachers once there is collaboration between a charter and a public school?
- Do teachers in a school that collaborates with a charter school have to leave the bargaining unit?

Next, Reshma Singh, Senior Director, Achievement First, gave an overview of how charters and public schools can collaborate, and answered questions from the Board around:

- Similarities and differences in the public pushback that Achievement First experienced in R.I. in comparison to other states.
- Collaboration between local districts and mayoral academies.

Next, Chairman Caruolo gave the Board of Regents an opportunity to discuss the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal with one another. Vice-Chairman Guida went over data that he had requested of RIDE and voiced his concern around the per pupil expenditures for the Blackstone Valley Mayoral Academy vs. those of Cranston and Providence.

Commissioner Gist stated that charter schools do not spend any more money than public schools and that their per pupil expenditure is exactly the same as of the sending districts (the money follows the student). The start-up costs are different, but once a school is established their commitment overtime is to spend the same amount of money as traditional public schools.

There was also discussion around:

- How much outside money do charter schools receive, who are the funders, and how is the money spent?
- Does start-up funding help to procure a building?
- Once school is up to scale and in full capacity by design does it operate under the same economic benefits from the state?
- What is the financial impact on Cranston and Providence schools when the money follows the child?

Chairman Caruolo went on to say that the conversation around the Achievement First proposal has fostered analysis and debate, and the probing of issues, which would not have come to the fore but for its scale. What he finds most interesting about it is that the Board will be thrust into considering what it is doing with charter schools, what the end game is, and what the larger impacts are as they grow in size. If they are just to remain as an experiment, they are really not a threat to the continued existence of the public school system. If they are to be emulated, then maybe they will be a positive, disruptive force. There are hidden agendas and folks are exercising tunnel vision on both sizes. The scale of the Achievement First proposal is going to force the Board to start thinking about the purpose of charter schools. Depending of what the end game is, this is something that the Board, RIDE and Commissioner have to think about.

He further stated that we cannot have charter schools into perpetuity that give opportunity to only a tiny percentage of children to the exclusion of others. These charter schools with their impressive results operate on a very small scale. The question at some point has to be asked whether or not they can in-fact operate on a large scale with the same impressive results.

Board members continued to have a discussion around:

- Board should look at the charter school laws in its entirety.
- Full integration model in the school system itself in order to have integration of ideas, professional development, etc.
- Opportunity for Board to build application from what the Board thinks is appropriate.
- Board approval of proposal should be about data and merits of application, data of individual student achievement, review of charter review board, and recommendation of Commissioner.
- What does the Board want the end game to be, what it ought to be?
- Base decision on facts, not emotions.

Chairman Caruolo suggested having the Board and RIDE do an analysis of what the charter schools are doing that is so attractive with an eye toward trying to figure out what is most effective and so grand. At some point the Board needs to migrate some of these things into public schools. He also suggested proposing legislation and seriously looking at how the Board can begin phase two of the transitional benefits of charter schools and ultimately start to change how everyone else does business.

There was further discussion around:

- Resources being taken away from the schools;

- The rationale around the number (900) of students in the proposal, and can the proportionality between Cranston and Providence be changed;
- How many charter schools will be created in order to meet the requirements of the Strategic Plan and Race to the Top grant;
- Whether both schools will be located in Cranston;
- How traditional schools can close the gap;
- Too much focus on track record of charter schools at the national level and not enough on how to can close the achievement gap statewide;
- Commitments of Charter School Grant from USDOE.
- Clarification whether the application is for 2 schools (900 students for phase I) or 1800 students (phase II – end of year 5).
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On a motion duly made by Regent Bernal and seconded by Regent Guida it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, K. Forbes, P. Guida, B. Shimberg

NAYS: 0

Regent Santos had left the meeting at this point on the agenda.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.